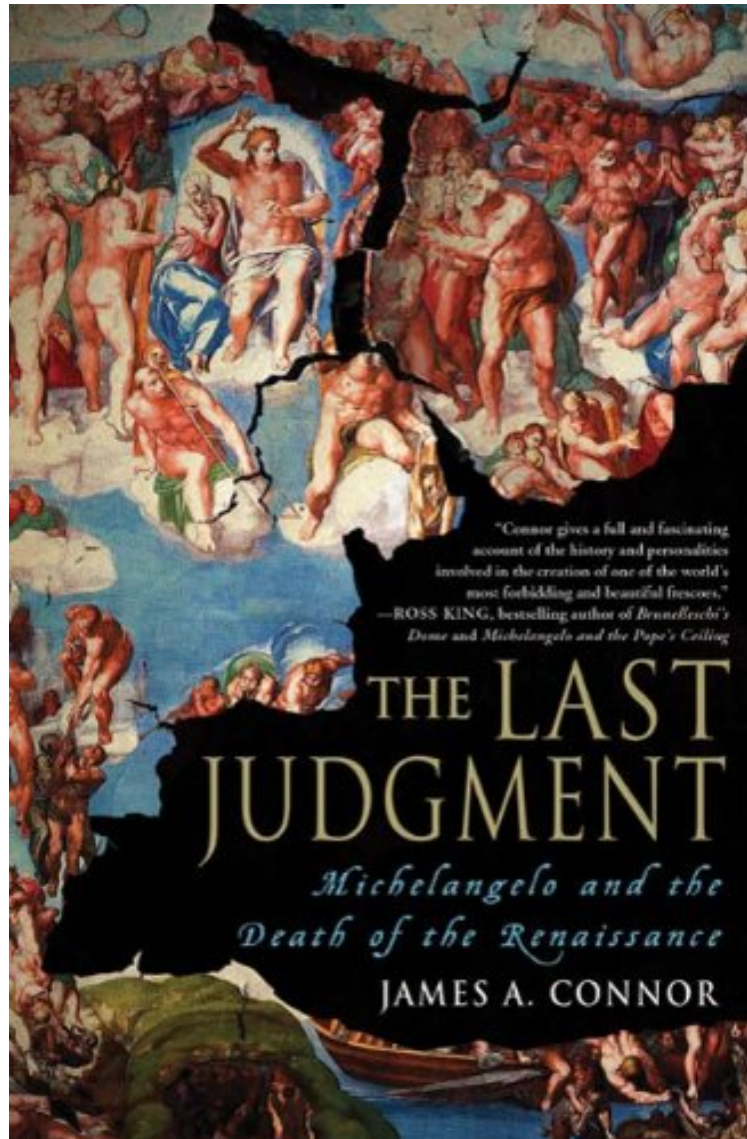


(Free download) The Last Judgment: Michelangelo and the Death of the Renaissance

The Last Judgment: Michelangelo and the Death of the Renaissance

James A. Connor

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James A. Connor : The Last Judgment: Michelangelo and the Death of the Renaissance before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Last Judgment: Michelangelo and the Death of the Renaissance:

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. SUPERB ACCOUNTING OF MICHAELANGELO'S MASTERPIECEBy Nixie"In planning his design, Michaelangelo understood that the primary beholder for his fresco would be the pope and not the public at large. Therefore, he set the structure of the fresco so that its proper viewing points would correspond with the places that the pope would inhabit the chapel." pg. 86Dr. Connor's excellent

scholarship and research offer the reader a unique vantage point to view this somewhat puzzling, confounding, but acknowledged masterpiece, along with the personalities involved. The writing is superb. Fresh and original points made in this book are finely supported so that the novice and the expert may comfortably find it very readable. The examination of the fresco should be of interest to historians, historians of religion and of art. The chapter on the fresco's censorship (pg. 185) is exceptionally interesting. This book should be used as a supplement in the study of this important work of art. Dr. Connor's book on the art, politics, and science of the renaissance has been a very clarifying read. I highly recommend it. 17 of 20 people found the following review helpful. MOSES' left hand.... By Richard Masloski So I am into this book 62 pages and thinking it's a pretty jumbled, uninspired accounting of the great Maestro and his life and times and work on the great fresco of 'The Last Judgement' and I hit this description of Michelangelo's magnificent, majestic marble sculpture of Moses: "...Moses sits with the tablets of the law in his hands, his face aged with worry, resting his chin on his left hand, as one lost in thought." Mmmm... Well, apparently James Connor (Professor of English at Kean University) didn't do too much thought when writing that description. In the sublime sculpture, Moses' left hand is nowhere near his chin - neither hand is! - and the 'tablets of the law' are NOT in his hands (the suggestion being both hands) - they are supported by the right arm and hand only. Also, Moses' face is not 'aged with worry': he's really not old looking at all, except for the long beard. No, to say his face is 'aged with worry' is a poor description. His face is filled with slow-burning anger at the iniquities of his people. Anyway, what is the point I am making? Simply this, all Mr. Connor had to do was look at a photo of the Moses sculpture to refamiliarize himself with its true pose before writing about it! Naturally, as I now plow forward through the remaining chapters, I am left wondering what else is wrong, inept, incorrect? What other landmines of literary bombs will I hit? I read a lot, mostly history and biography. And it seems to be a growing and troublesome trend that many, many of the books I read are peppered with factual errors that should NOT escape the author nor the proof-reader nor the authorities who offer blurbs for the book's dustjackets. Yet they do, in increasing numbers it seems! Scholarship... is not what it was in the good old days. I'll edit this review once I have finished this thus-far disappointing book. UPDATE - URGENT: On page 155, in discussing the The Creation of Adam on the Sistine Ceiling, Prof. Connor writes: "In the panel of the creation of Adam, both God and Adam are naked, which makes sense because Adam is in a state of innocence before the fall and does not realize that he is naked, while God in his perfection is depicted in the Greek Style, with a perfect body that indicates a perfection of spirit." To borrow the title from Kubrick's last film, Prof. Connor must have written this book with 'eyes wide shut.' God is NOT naked in the fresco depicting the creation of Adam!!!! Why do people write about things before fully researching them????? Especially our Professors, educators of tomorrow's torch-bearers! Pitiful, truly. 1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Michelangelo's last waltz By M. A. Newman The Last Judgment represents the last major fresco by Michelangelo. Although the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel will always be regarded as the artist's masterpiece, this book by James A. Conner provides context for the execution of this late work by the last master of the Renaissance. Michelangelo was the product of the Florentine school of painting with its emphasis on drawing and the execution of forms. Vasari in his biography of Michelangelo discusses the differences between his fellow Tuscan countryman and that of his nearest rival, Titian of Venice who emphasized color over form. Vasari may have been the first art historian, however his study of Michelangelo really short-changes a number of features that Conner addresses in this work on the Last Judgment. Color, and in particular the vast areas of ultramarine in the painting, made from ground lapis lazuli and tempura. While Michelangelo always viewed drawing and the form of an image as essential, the brilliance of that creation was another fundamental consideration, the extent of which Conner provides ample documentation. The Last Judgment comes at the end of the Renaissance and follows the notorious sack of Rome by the Imperial troops of Charles V. This event was a wake-up call to the papacy, which had enmeshed itself in the dominant humanist and secular culture derived from the rediscovery of Greek and Roman texts. Neo-Platonic thought, which dominated the courts of Italy including the Papal one, could never serve as the basis of any popular movement and would do much to isolate the papacy from many of its followers in places such as Germany where the Reformation was breaking out. Like all great art, The Last Judgment is the synthesis of a number of intellectual trends that were active during its creation. The Last Judgment is not only the product of the secular pagan sensibility, most obviously in the form the Jesus/Apollo figure at the center of the work, but it also combined the views of Aquinas as well as Dante. There is also a subversive element in its implied advocacy of a heliocentric view of the universe. The focus on celestial justice, a theme of the painting, is also taken from Michelangelo's experiences living under the rule of the Florentine republic of Savonarola. Conner's ability to pick out these elements in the Last Judgment is one of the strong points of the work. The process of creating a fresco like the Last Judgment was a tedious one since it involved painting over wet plaster. One had to work fast and in specific segments before the plaster dried or one was forced to start over again. Michelangelo viewed the execution of fresco to be one of the true tests of an artist. There was very little room for spontaneity in the execution of the design under the limitations imposed by the medium. Conner provides very good technical details concerning the execution. Coming as it did at the end of the Renaissance when the Catholic Church was re-examining the mentalities that lead to the sack of Rome and the Protestant reformation, it is natural that a work such as the Last Judgment would become controversial. As church prelates attempted to refocus cultural matters, the degree of nudity in the Last Judgment - something that was

understood in the humanist Renaissance, but not in the more populist times that followed. Some of the naive critics dismissed the Last Judgment as a painting more appropriate for a tavern than a church. Luckily the post-Renaissance leaders of the Catholic Church were so fixated on the nudity that they did not notice the heliocentric subtext. Had this subversive element been noticed, it most certainly would have been destroyed. As it happened a painter was engaged to cover the nudity of some of the saints and martyrs as well as the damned. James Conner has chronicled the birth and life of a great work of art. His book places the Last Judgment in the proper historical context.

Painted on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, 28 years after Michelangelo completed the glorious and hopeful ceiling, The Last Judgment is full of stark images depicting the End of Days. James Connor uses the famous fresco as the lens by which to view the end of the Renaissance, arguing that Michelangelo's imagery and composition reflect the religious and political upheavals of the time. Combining his flair for storytelling with incisive historical analysis, Connor demonstrates how the Counter-Reformation arose from the ashes of Renaissance Italy, and how that sea change altered the course of Western history.

From Publishers Weekly Michelangelo did not want to create the Last Judgment (1537–1541), yet, argues Connor (Pascal's Wager), it was his clearest expression of the terror at the bottom of his psyche, a terror stemming largely from the conflict between his probable homosexual desires and his religious faith. Connor traces the creation of the Last Judgment and Michelangelo's struggle to reconcile his innate religious zeal with his love for nobleman Tommaso de Cavalieri. Connor's narrative is compelling, his writing vivid and evocative. An English professor and former Jesuit priest, he superbly places the Last Judgment in the context of Copernicus's heliocentric universe and of the Catholic reforms of Savonarola and the Council of Trent. Yet the Council condemned the work for its nudity and unconventional portraits of religious figures; a chapter on the fresco's censorship is one of the book's most fascinating. The monumental painting was ultimately driven less by Michelangelo's artistic impulses than by his desire for salvation. Connor presents an indispensable perspective for the general reader as well as fresh insights for the specialist. (July) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Praise for The Last Judgment: